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Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman Chairman, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform The Republican National Committee: Subpoena A April 25, 2007

We are now going to consider the first of two subpoenas to the Republican National Committee.

Over the past year, three separate congressional investigations have found that White House officials rely on RNC e-mail accounts to conduct official White House business and to communicate with agency officials.

One of the investigations — an examination of the General Services Administration — found that a White House official had used his RNC account to plan for a political briefing that was held at GSA headquarters and broadcast through a video feed to GSA offices nationwide. This briefing was a political and strategic event that had no connection to GSA's mission. It should not have taken place in a federal building.

Another investigation — an examination into White House contacts with lobbyist Jack Abramoff — found that White House officials were using RNC e-mail accounts to communicate with Abramoff lobbyists about official government business. Some of the e-mails suggested using the RNC accounts to avoid leaving a record of the communications.

And the third investigation involved the firing of the U.S. Attorneys.

The use of RNC e-mails to conduct official White House business is a serious abuse. The RNC "document preservation" policy is to destroy e-mails after 30 days. As a result, years of e-mails from top White House officials like Karl Rove were deleted. Even today, it is unclear how many of these e-mails can be recovered.

The failure to preserve these e-mails is a violation of the Presidential Records Act. As the Committee with jurisdiction over this Act, we have sought basic information from the RNC about the magnitude of the problem.

Over the past month, the Committee has sent four letters to the RNC requesting information about the use of RNC e-mail accounts by White House officials. We have asked —

repeatedly — for the most basic information, such as the names of the officials who have RNC e-mail accounts, how many e-mails they sent and received, and how many e-mails were sent to federal agencies through RNC accounts.

But the RNC has not been responsive. We have been slow-walked and stone-walled, and that is not acceptable.

The RNC sent a letter this morning that provides no additional information except a list of 37 White House officials who used RNC e-mail accounts — and even this information appears incomplete, as the RNC had informed us there were approximately 50 White House account holders. The RNC's letter also states the total kilobytes of email for these users, the significance of which is unclear. And this information does not answer basic question of how many e-mails were sent by each White House account user.

As a result, I am asking the Committee to approve this subpoena. It asks the RNC to provide answers to basic questions about the use of RNC e-mail accounts by White House officials, such as a list of which officials uses these accounts and how many e-mails they sent and received. The deadline is two weeks.

It also asks the head of the RNC, Mike Duncan, to appear before the Committee in two weeks to testify about these matters. Depending on the kind of response the Committee receives from the RNC in the interim, I will consult with the members about whether the Committee will need to proceed with this hearing.

This is a narrow subpoena that seeks the most basic information from the RNC, and I ask for its approval.